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SUBJECT: **Deputy Secretary's Focus Report**

The following is a brief summary of Department of Transportation events and items of interest from the past month:

OPERATIONAL ITEMS:

OEO FAIRS WELL IN STATE DISPARITY STUDY

The Office of Equal Opportunity (OEO) made final corrections to WSDOT's statistical data collected for the state's Disparity Study conducted by the Office of Minority and Women's Business Enterprises (OMWBE). The comprehensive report showed participation by MWBEs in the contracting area, both in bidding and in actual utilization. WSDOT and the University of Washington were the two largest contributors among the 37 state agencies surveyed. The consultant doing the study is expected to provide all agencies with guidelines to assist them in developing on-going data retention. WSDOT may be asked to provide information on a yearly basis.

NEW INTERCHANGE DEDICATED ON I-5 IN MARYSVILLE

The new 88th Street Northeast interchange on Interstate 5 in Marysville was officially opened with a ribbon-cutting ceremony last month celebrating the completion of this 18-month-long, \$10.5 million project involving cooperation among the Tulalip Tribes, the Federal Highway Administration, Snohomish County, the city of Marysville, and the Washington State Department of Transportation.

The project included the new interchange on I-5 at 88th Street Northeast; reconstruction of 88th Street between I-5 and State Avenue; repaving north- and southbound I-5 between SR 529 and the new interchange; a new bridge over I-5 for 88th Street; and replacement of the bridge over Quilceda Creek.

Work began in July 1995 after a decade of planning and is expected to relieve congestion at the Fourth Street and 116th Street Northeast interchanges, give school buses a safer route into area neighborhoods, and improve access to the north Marysville area businesses. The new interchange will also provide access to the extension of Quil Ceda Way west of I-5 for a future business and industrial park planned by the Tulalip Tribes.

RESCUES BY AIR SAVE LOCAL FLOOD VICTIMS

WSDOT's Aviation Division SAR Coordinator was kept busy during the March floods assigning air assets to various parts of Western Washington. The most notable was the airlift of a 75-year-old woman who needed hospital attention. She was flown from the flooding Skokomish river near Hoodport. In Grays Harbor County, video equipped crews were airlifted for surveys of Satsop, Elma and Hoquiam. A mission was flown in Lewis County as well.

REZONE REQUEST GETS A THUMBS DOWN

The Everett City Council turned down a rezone request for development at the north end of Paine Field. WSDOT's Aviation Division was joined by CTED, The Boeing Company, and Snohomish County, in opposing the rezone. A principal factor in the denial was that the rezone would be contrary to the encroachment law, passed by last year's legislature.

NORTH CENTRAL REPRESENTED AT "SMARTGROWTH" SEMINAR

North Central Region administrator Don Senn, attended the "Smartgrowth" seminar held in Wenatchee on March 15. The seminar focused on helping communities plan in accordance with the growth management act by looking at how land use planning and community design can reduce the social, economic, and environmental costs associated with suburban sprawl. Commissioner Tom Green spoke on the Washington State Transportation Commission's role for transportation planning to involve all interested parties crossing all jurisdictions.

NORTH CASCADES HIGHWAY BEGINNING TO AWAKEN

North Central Region maintenance crews began work on opening the North Cascades Highway on March 10. One-hundred-thirty inches of snow has fallen since February 24, and on March 19, an avalanche occurred at Cutthroat 1. The slide was 400 feet in length. On March 24, the crews renewed their effort in conjunction with Fairview Construction, using three bulldozers and three snowblowers to clear snow. WSDOT maintenance crews report an abundance of debris in the slide including wood, trees, and rocks.

SR 519 INTERMODAL ACCESS PROJECT MOVING FORWARD

The SR 519 project is moving from a National Environmental Protection Agency (NEPA) environmental study into the design phase. The design process for the project will produce a set of construction ready plans, specifications and estimates which will include a grade separation of SR 519 over the Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) mainline tracks along the Seattle waterfront, a realignment of the surface portion of SR 519 to improve ferry traffic and freight mobility to and from the Port of Seattle, and two pedestrian walkways over the BNSF mainline tracks. One walkway will connect the transit station in the International District with the Kingdome and Pioneer Square while the other will connect a transit stop on Royal Brougham Way with the new ballpark/Kingdome area.

WSDOT will act as lead agency during the design process with \$4.5 million in Federal Surface Transportation Program (STP) funds. Other contributing agencies involved are City of Seattle, Washington State Major League Baseball Public Facilities District, King County, BNSF and Port of Seattle. The anticipated construction start date will be during the winter of 1998/99.

ENGINEERING NEGOTIATIONS WITH LOCAL 17 WRAPPING UP

WSDOT and Local 17 hope to conclude negotiations on the new Engineering Agreement by April 30, 1997. During negotiations, the parties have used the Interest Based Bargaining (IBB) rather than the traditional give-and-take negotiating process used in the past. In IBB, the union and management teams individually identify issues they wish to address in the negotiations and then, during negotiations, discuss each other's interests relating to

those issues. The parties then brainstorm a list of options that have at least the potential for meeting the interests of both sides. Once consensus is reached, the options agreed upon are added to the new collective bargaining agreement or, in some cases, in Memos of Understanding (MOU) or Bring It Up Later (BUL) List of separate action items.

ETHICAL STANDARDS NOW CAN BE SELF-STUDIED USING TEXT

A self-study programmed text version of the Ethical Standards course on the 1994 State Ethics Law has been developed. A draft copy is currently under review by the Office of the Attorney General, the Secretary of the Executive Ethics Board, and the WSDOT Audit Office. Upon completion of reviews and appropriate revisions, the manual will be distributed for use. This version will be available to all new employees in their hiring packets with instructions that it must be completed within the first 30 days of their employment. Supervisors will administer the exam and notify the Staff Development office to update the employee's training record to show that the Ethical Standards training was received.

WSDOT/WSP PONDER TOW TRUCKS ON I-5

WSP called a meeting with WSDOT to discuss several options of solving the tow truck problem at the I-5 bridge over the Columbia River. The challenge is to resolve the jurisdictional issue with tow companies. Currently an Oregon tow company doesn't want to hook up to a disabled vehicle in Washington since they have to drop the vehicle in Washington. It has been reported that many disabled vehicles do not have insurance and the only collateral they have is the vehicle itself. If the vehicle is dropped in Washington at a Washington impound site they lose the collateral and the ability to collect for the tow. State law apparently requires an impounded vehicle to be stored in Washington.

REPAIRS MAY CAUSE LENGTHY CLOSURES

WSDOT and ODOT have had several meetings to discuss the imminent repair of the northbound I-5 Columbia River Bridge. Of concern is the trunion shaft and bearings that were originally installed in 1917 and later repaired by a process that has apparently contributed to the current failure. To repair the shaft and bearings, the structure will be closed utilizing one of two scenarios. The popular alternative is to close the structure for 21 days and get the job done without traffic at all. The southbound structure would be reconfigured to two lanes south and one lane north with the possibility of reversing this configuration for the afternoon peak. The other alternative being considered is to close the bridge just when the work is being done overhead. Because of the intermittent work and the time necessary to implement traffic control it was estimated that a total of 36 closure days would be necessary over a 90 day window. This option would make it difficult to inform the public of the closure times..

MITIGATION SITE NOT A EASY FIND FOR WSDOT

In looking to acquire and prepare a mitigation site to offset wetland impacts at Bingen & White Salmon associated with the SR 14 - Dock Grade Intersection improvement project, WSDOT found the cost of the mitigation site would be extremely expensive.

It also became apparent that WSDOT would either have to condemn as right-of-way for a mitigation site and pay the large land value, or acquire a site outside the cities. Previous experience with stagnant water situations in communities indicated that swamp-like mitigation sites could be very offensive to the communities. Another 'sore point' with local communities is property acquisitions reduce land-base for both taxation and development purposes. Staff reviewed possible mitigation areas easterly of the project site, both within and beyond the National Scenic Area boundaries. This did not yield an obvious, no-fail, prospective mitigation site. However, contact was made with a Habitat Biologist for Klickitat County. Explaining the situation of limited funds, WSDOT was shown several

areas having the potential for mitigation projects. An introduction to very receptive State Parks personnel brought the idea that the wetlands could be a valuable enhancement to a resource agency, wanting that type of development on their lands.

At this point, a letter was prepared and sent out to all known public land resource agencies within the greater Columbia River Gorge area soliciting opportunities for developing wetland on their ownership. Immediate responses were made by Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission and the United States Forest Service. State Parks offered a site where an in-place Master Plan had been developed that included enlarging and enhancing an existing rock pit wetland. State Parks preliminary contacts for permitting was conducted.

MOUNTAIN PASS COMMUNICATIONS TO IMPROVE

On March 19th, Olympia Service Center Maintenance staff as well as staff from the North Central, South Central, and Southwest Regions met to discuss improved communications for mountain pass closures. With a record number of pass closures during this past winter, the issue of improved communications has become important. The group developed a problem statement and brainstormed all of the issues that affect closures on mountain passes. The list of issues related to communication was sent to the three major passes in order for them to list the issues in order of importance and also note estimated costs for improvement in those areas. Another meeting to finalize improvements will take place April 19th.

STORMS DELIVER ANOTHER BLOW TO OLYMPIC REGION HIGHWAYS

Heavy March rains delivered another blow to Olympic Region highways, with damage estimates of \$683,600. Especially hard hit was the Olympic Peninsula where US 101 was closed in several locations due to slides along the Hood Canal and as a result of flooding at the Skokomish River Bridge north of Shelton. Damage also occurred in Jefferson County on US 101 south of Forks where the Hoh River washed away one lane of the highway. Mud and floods also blocked sections of SR 3, SR 106 and SR 302 in Mason County, SR 166 in Kitsap County, and SR 112 and SR 113 in Clallam County. In addition, US 12 between Elma and Aberdeen was closed for a full day due to flooding of the Satsop and Wynoochee Rivers.

CONSTRUCTION CONFERENCE BRINGS WSDOT STAFF TOGETHER

The WSDOT Olympia Service Center (OSC) Construction Office participated in Winter Construction Conferences in the Southwest Region on March 11, in the North Central Region on March 19, and in the South Central Region on March 20. These conferences provided opportunities for OSC staff to meet with the regional construction staff to hear their concerns, discuss problems that occurred over the past year, and update the regions with the latest developments in the construction field.

CONTRACT AD & AWARDS

February 1997 bids were opened on eight preservation projects for a total of eight new contracts. The total engineer's estimate was \$28,820,784.31, with total bids of \$27,773,523.18, or 3.63 percent below the estimate. There were 220 uncompleted contracts with a total work-in-progress dollar value of \$1,084,899,017.51.

"TRAINS" INVOLVED IN JOINT STUDY BY WSDOT & OFM

WSDOT's Accounting Services Office spent the month of March providing information to the Dye Management Group and the Office of Financial Management (OFM) on specialized

features of the Transportation Reporting and Accounting Information System (TRAINS) as part of a joint study funded by OFM. Ways to use more of OFM's reporting features is being explored. In addition, OFM is looking at ways to add concepts to the statewide system that are present in TRAINS. The study will continue through April and provide a report on the information gained. A recommendation has been made that OFM and WSDOT accounting and systems personnel continue to meet quarterly to keep up the information exchange.

IMPROVEMENTS MADE IN WSF EMPLOYEE CLAIMS PROCESSING

WSDOT's Risk Management and Washington State Ferry (WSF) personnel have completed the process review of handling employee injury claims in order to make process improvements and better serve WSF boat employees. A final report of recommendations has gone to the WSF Human Resources Director with the goal of improving all phases of the risk management process over these claims, while at the same time improving service to the employees. The report clearly indicates a need for increased focus on the management of claims within WSF relative to training, completing forms, monitoring employee injury status, and accommodating employees.

WSDOT & FHWA PARTNERING IN SNOHOMISH WATERSHED PROJECT

The Federal Highway Administration has agreed to partner with WSDOT to fund and implement the Snohomish Watershed Project as research and as a national demonstration project for applying watershed management to transportation and environmental decision making. This demonstration project's goals will be to achieve coordinated and shared decision making by all levels of government, to streamline and shorten processes while avoiding conflicts, and to achieve a balance of social, economic, and environmental values. During April, FHWA staff will meet with Shari Schaftlein, Water Quality Program Manager, in Washington, D.C. to develop short and long term goals, strategies, and scope for this landmark collaboration. Results of this project will have far reaching effects on the way state DOT's implement NEPA regulations.

STRUCTURAL ENGINEERS EXAM MAY EXPAND

Representatives from the Washington Board of Registration for Professional Engineers came to the WSDOT Bridge and Structures Office to discuss possible changes to the Structural Engineer's exam and the effect on reciprocity with other states. The proposal involves changing the current structural exam to a national exam that would be accepted by other states. The new structure would likely be 16 hours worth of nation-wide applicable questions with another four hours of testing addressing region-specific structural design issues.

"NEXRAD" MONITORS WEATHER CONDITIONS FOR MOTORISTS

The final report entitled "*The NEXRAD Radar System as a Tool in Highway Traffic Management*" documents the effort to develop a systematic approach for integrating NEXRAD data into the Seattle area's Traffic System Management Center. The project derived traffic-based weather products and developed indices to characterize weather related driving conditions. Conclusions are that the NEXRAD weather radar holds promise for assisting in the management of large urban transportation systems.

COMMUTE TRIP REDUCTION HOT ISSUE WITH LOCAL JURISDICTIONS

Local jurisdiction concerns about the level of state involvement in local Commute Trip Reduction (CTR) programs heated up during a recent meeting to discuss policy direction. Some jurisdictions desiring greater self-determination perceive the Legislature's and CTR Task Force's efforts to strengthen statutes and amplify administrative guidelines as

unwanted WSDOT intervention in local affairs. Ways to ease the CTR program's growing pains are being considered as staff and a Task Force Subcommittee continue to work on policy responses to the experiences and concerns of affected private employers.

WSF DEMONSTRATING EXCELLENT SERVICE

For the month of March, 1997, WSF completed 14,077 of 14,187 scheduled trips for a completion rate of 99.22%. Year-to-date figures show WSF at a 99.35% completion rate.

BAINBRIDGE ISLAND TERMINAL WORK CONTINUES

Work on multiple projects for the Bainbridge Island terminal continues for WSF. Completed are the portions of the City's Master Plan that address the 20 to 30 year plans for the terminal. This effort has concluded its public comment period, but is still being reviewed by an appointed committee that is overseeing the entire process. WSF continues to have discussions with the committee and work diligently to respond to concerns. The assignment of the third vessel to the route, even though not a part of the proposal, continues to interrupt attempts to conclude efforts. Other issues such as central cross sound route parity and past planning decisions are not fully understood by the community, as expressed in the opinions of the committee and in the local press.

OVERHEAD PASSENGER LOADING PROJECT A STEP CLOSER TO CONSTRUCTION

The plans for the Overhead Passenger Loading project are under final review. WSF recently received approval from the Army Corps of Engineers. There is a possibility that the Shorelines Hearings Board decision to grant WSF a permit may be appealed. Under recent statutes, WSF may begin construction even if the project approval is again appealed. The advertisement date is anticipated to be in May, 1997.

TRAFFIC LIGHT INSTALLED TO ELIVIAE DRIVEWAY BLOCKAGE

The shoreside improvement project, which will install a traffic light at the entrance to the dock, is underway. This project was designed by WSF staff with assistance from the NW Region. The project allowed restriping of traffic lanes on the approach to the ferry dock, and should reduce incidences of queued ferry traffic blocking access to local driveways. The on-site work for the traffic light started March 3, 1997. Night work will also occur to do the main trenching work across SR 525.

QUALITY ITEMS:

AUDIT OFFICE REVIEWING REVISED FEDERAL LAW REQUIREMENTS

Wayne Donaldson, Director of the WSDOT Audit Office, met with members of an AASHTO Audit Task Force, the American Consulting Engineering Counsel, and representatives from FHWA Washington D.C. Engineering Design Office, for the purpose of developing suggested language for implementation of revised federal law requirements. The NHS bill section 307 impacted current practices regarding overhead costs for consultants.

OEO WORKSHOP SPARKS CONTRACTOR INTEREST

Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) staff conducted a workshop for the Northern Chapter of the Association of General Contractors (AGC) in Bellingham on March 25, 1997. Half of the participants were personnel of Wilder Company. After the workshop, staff were asked if they would consider conducting a workshop exclusively for Wilder Company, so that all their employees would completely understand the purpose and

workings of the program. There were numerous questions, concerns and comments about program activities.

NW REGION USING QUALITY TOOLS TO CONTINUOUSLY IMPROVE
WSDOT's NW Region Project Development staff along with staff from various consulting firms used quality tools to help identify ways of improving consultant-administered projects.

The process started with a series of brainstorming activities to help uncover major problem areas on consultant-administered contracts. Brainstorming exercises were held with a Project Development group and a group from the Consulting Engineers Council of Washington (CECW).

Problem areas were then formulated into common problem statements. Statements were addressed in a workshop consisting of about 60 individuals from WSDOT regions. The workshop used the Cause and Effect Diagram quality tool process to break down the problems into causes and then develop theories for solutions. The groups generated over 100 theories for solutions and discovered common themes for improvement. Data will be used to develop new ways of doing business and for continuous improvement to existing processes.

JOINT EFFORT BRINGS WSDOT & FEDERAL PROGRAMS TOGETHER
A joint Federal Financial Management Improvement Project (FMIP) and WSDOT Quality Improvement effort on both the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) was initiated recently with the first of several field reviews held in the Wenatchee area March 24-25. The team consisted of both FHWA and FTA participants along with WSDOT representatives from Planning, Program Management, and TransAid.

Some confusion has resulted in the implementation of this complex area of overlapping federal TIP and STIP and state program legislation and regulations. The TIP and STIP processes are good candidates for a quality effort to clarify, streamline, and simplify. Additional interviews with counties, cities, transit organizations, and WSDOT staff will occur over the next several months with a draft report out in early summer.

RAIL OFFICE PLANNING FACE-TO-FACE CUSTOMER RESEARCH
WSDOT's Rail Office, in partnership with Amtrak, will begin conducting statistically valid surveys of current Pacific Northwest Amtrak riders in May. This research will help provide direct customer input for policy, long and short-term planning, equipment purchases, operations, marketing, on-board service ticket prices, and schedules. Staff from WSDOT and Amtrak will be trained in face-to-face survey techniques and will conduct surveys aboard Amtrak Pacific Northwest trains four times per year.

GOOD NEWS ITEMS:

AVIATION CONTEST WINNERS HEADED TO WASHINGTON D.C.
Three winners will represent the State of Washington in the International Aviation Art Contest in Washington D.C. and Switzerland. The contest, sponsored by the FAA and the National Association of State Aviation Officials, is administered in Washington State by the Aviation Division's Randi Christensen. More than 90 entrants designed a postage stamp with an aviation theme.

WSDOT EMPLOYEE DEMONSTRATES EXCELLENT CUSTOMER SERVICE

Catherine Larson, in WSDOT's SW Region Planning Office, went the extra mile when she discovered the Columbia River Windsurfing Association was unable to access the Internet address of a newsletter about the SR 14 Corridor Management Plan. After trouble shooting the problem, it was realized the Windsurfing Association lacked software that allows users to access a computer file on the Internet. Catherine contacted experts who were able to provide the necessary information that would allow the Association to download the software and access the website and corridor information. The Windsurfers plan to forward the information to nearly 500 members who have Internet access. By forwarding the information, those 500 people will receive WSDOT's Internet address! Catherine went beyond her call of duty and as a result, provided WSDOT with outreach to nearly 500 people.

HOOD CANAL BRIDGE MONITORING MOVES TO OLYMPIC RADIO

New Hood Canal Bridge monitoring equipment has been installed at Olympic Region's Radio Communications Center in Parkland. The equipment will provide up to the minute information on wind speeds and temperature, and includes a [regularly updated](#) video screen of the midspan. A built-in alarm will sound at Olympic Radio when wind speeds reach 35 mph and prompt radio operators to call out a bridge operator to assess the situation. With these new capabilities, radio operators will be able to track bridge openings and more quickly relay information to the public through variable message signs along US 101, SR 3 and SR 305.

DEVELOPER MITIGATION EFFORTS BRING POSITIVE RESULTS

The intersection of SR 507 and SR 702 in McKenna will become safer this summer thanks to a year-long effort by Olympic Region's Developer Services to bring about a successful developer mitigation agreement. BTS, Inc., the developer, delivered a \$45,000 down payment towards a \$300,000 mitigation that will result in a new traffic signal, intersection channelization, realignment of a school entrance with the intersection, and two-way turn lanes on SR 507 and SR 702. A high level of cooperation between the developer and Region design, plans, real estate services and project engineer's offices was key to the success of this mitigation effort. Federal and state funds will cover the remaining project costs. Total project costs are estimated at \$700,000.

SHOWCASE TO FEATURE HIGH PERFORMANCE CONCRETE

WSDOT's Office of Technology Applications is coordinating a SHRP High Performance Concrete (HPC) showcase which will be held in Bellevue, August 18-20. Experts from around the country will be on hand to share design and construction benefits of the use of HPC. A unique feature of the Washington State Showcase will be a field review of a recently constructed three-span, continuous prestressed concrete girder bridge on SR18 where the number of girder lines was reduced from seven to five by the use of HPC.

FIVE WSDOT PROJECTS MAKE THE TOP TWENTY LIST OF 1996

The *Daily Journal of Commerce*, in conjunction with the consulting community, selected twenty Public Works Projects as the "Top 20 for 1996". Of the 20, five were WSDOT projects. All five projects had direct involvement by members of the Geotechnical Branch as well as geotechnical consultants who were reviewed in detail by the Geotechnical Branch staff.

WSDOT REPRESENTED ON AASHTO COMMITTEE

Dennis Jackson, State Materials Engineer, has been appointed to a two-year term as Vice-Chair of the AASHTO National Transportation Product Evaluation Program (NTPEP)

Oversight Committee. NTPEP was created by AASHTO to pool the professional and physical resources of participating resources and approve the cost-effectiveness of product evaluations.

PRINT ON DEMAND FEATURE KEEPING WSDOT EFFICIENT

The Xerox DocuTech copier that WSDOT acquired by partnering with the State Printer is proving to be a valuable asset to the Department. The “print on demand” capability of the copier is very popular with customers. Many department documents and manuals are now being run “as needed,” rather than stockpiling for anticipated distribution in the future. A tape drive was added to the DocuTech to increase storage capacity. There is currently about 100 jobs stored on the tape drive for future printing.

Cartography created sets of large maps depicting the Senate’s New Revenue projects and Current Law Budget projects which were requested for display during the Legislative Committee meeting in which the Senate presented its revenue package. One set included only the new revenue version, while the other included both new and existing budget projects. These map sets included statewide versions and enlargements of the Puget Sound area.

SURVEY RECEIVES STATE MERIT AWARD

Kurt Iverson of WSDOT’s Geographic Services Survey Section and National Geodetic Survey (NGS) Advisor Gary Perasso of WSDOT received awards of Merit at the Land Surveyors Association of Washington (LSAW) convention for their outstanding contribution to the profession in the year 1996.

SMART TRIPPER WINS PUGET SOUND REGIONAL COUNCIL AWARD

On March 13, the Smart Tripper booklet, an activity-based alternative transportation curriculum, developed by Kitsap Transit and the WSDOT Commute Trip Reduction Office, received one of four PSRC Vision 2020 Honor Awards. Through fun and interactive exercises, the Smart Tripper booklet presents sixth graders with an overview of the problems associated with our growing dependence on single-occupant vehicle travel, and the benefits of alternative transportation modes. The booklet was originally a joint project of Kitsap Transit and the Washington State Energy Office. Last fall a copy of the booklet was sent to each sixth grade class in the state, with instruction on how to obtain additional copies. To date, more than 12,000 copies have been distributed to elementary and middle schools statewide.

ANACORTES/SIDNEY RUN GET THE GREEN LIGHT

M/V Evergreen State was given the green light by the U.S. Coast Guard to conduct Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS) certified service between Anacortes and Sidney, B.C. following successful demonstration of the newly established crew requirements to abandon the vessel using newly installed marine evacuation slides (MES). The abandon ship drill, conducted under the watchful eye of the Coast Guard and news media, put 250 volunteers down the MES into life rafts which were then pulled clear of the vessel using the ship’s rescue boats. A similar drill is required to be performed on the M/V Elwha April 20th.

